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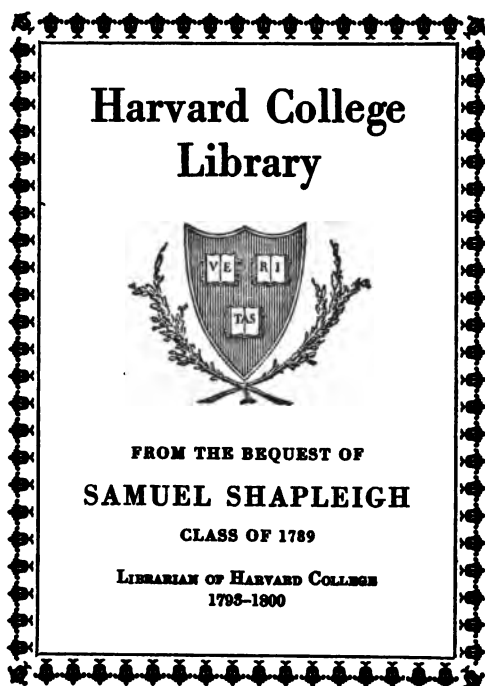
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New Glimpses of Poe



BUST OF EDGAR ALLAN POE from the plaster model by George J. Zolnay, the bronze replica of which is now in the library of the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, Va.

New Glimpses of Poe

BY

JAMES A. HARRISON

Professor in the University of Virginia



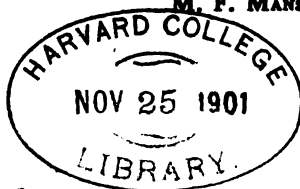
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Dedicated
to
The Poe Memorial Association
of the
University of Virginia

*I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand—
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep
While I weep—while I weep!
—A Dream Within a Dream*

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PROEM

THE chapters constituting this little book originally appeared in *The Independent* for September, 1900, and are reprinted here through the courtesy of the editor. Such as they are, they are the outgrowth of a movement among the students and professors of the University of Virginia to do honor to Poe, its most famous alumnus, and remove from his memory the slanders of Griswold and others. This movement resulted, among other things, in the formation of The Poe Memorial Association, the purchase and placing of a beautiful bust of the poet, by Zolnay, in the Library of the University, and the consecration to Poe and his fellow Southern

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writers of an alcove where might be gathered as completely as possible all the works of distinguished Southrons, for study and delectation. Thus far about 200 volumes grace the shelves of this little collection, two-thirds of them contributed freely and generously by famous living Southern authors who individually and collectively expressed their pleasure in being associated with Poe in this renaissance of Southern letters.

Another outgrowth of the movement was the noble address of Hamilton Wright Mabie, Esq., literary editor of *The Outlook*, in October, 1899, on "Poe's Place in American Literature," delivered before the Association on the occasion of the unveiling of the Zolnay bust in the great Hall of the University,—an address afterwards published in fitting form in the pages of *The Atlantic Monthly*.

The three glimpses of Poe as Playmate, Student, Lecturer, as Child, Youth, and Man, sprung from the correspondence of the writer with two or three intimates and contemporaries of the poet who preserved on

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the tablets of their memories little scenes and reminiscences that seemed worthy of preservation and who have permitted him to reproduce them here in permanent form.

POE MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

FOR the benefit of those who do not know the purpose and aim of this association, the following resolutions and constitution, adopted at the founding of the association in November, 1897, are given:

"WHEREAS our most famous Alumnus, Edgar Allan Poe, has never been sufficiently honored here at the University of Virginia by public testimonials of his worth;

And whereas it has now been determined to erect to his memory a bronze bust in the new library;

And whereas it is clearly the pious duty of the University of Virginia to collect and preserve all of his literary productions, souvenirs of his life and work and material contributing to the full understanding and appreciation of his career; therefore be it

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Resolved, That for these and kindred purposes we here and now organize a permanent Poe Memorial Association.

CONSTITUTION OF THE POE MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION :

ART. I.

The members of this Association shall be all those who have contributed, or shall hereafter contribute, the sum of one dollar or more to further the purposes of the Association.

II.

The officers of the Association shall be a President, a Vice-President, and a Secretary and Treasurer elected at the annual meeting in November, and in addition it shall be in the province of the Association to elect Honorary Vice-Presidents from non-resident members of the Association.

III.

The duties of the officers shall be those usually appertaining to the offices they fill, but in addition it shall be the duty of the Secretary and Treasurer to prepare and cause to be published in COLLEGE TOPICS, twice during the session, once near the beginning and once near the end of the session, a full statement of all moneys received and disbursed, together with such other information as the Executive Council may deem advisable.

IV.

The Executive Council, composed of the three

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officers of the Association, and six members elected by the Association at its annual meeting in November, shall have full control of all plans and their execution, subject, of course, to the general judgment of the Association.

The following officers were elected: President, Dr. Charles W. Kent; Vice-President, Schuyler Poitevent; Secretary, Prof. James A. Harrison. Members of Executive Council, Gordon Wilson, E. H. H. Old, L. C. Williams, R. S. Brank.

CHARACTERISTICS

EDGAR ALLAN POE'S twin connection with New York and the University of Virginia makes any new light or new incident of local color connected with the poet interesting to his admirers in both localities. Tennyson's belief, lately expressed in his memoirs, that Poe was "the most original genius that America had produced," sets a seal upon his fame not easily to be overestimated even by indiscreet eulogists, and justifies readers of his works in rescuing from oblivion before it is too late anecdotes and adventures or eccentricities that may hitherto have escaped notice.

While engaged in collecting material for filling the Poe Alcove in the new Rotunda Library of the University of Virginia I had

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the good fortune to fall into correspondence with several gentlemen who had known Poe personally, one of them intimately. They wrote out their reminiscences of the author of the famous tales and poems, and now kindly permit their use in this paper. The fading fires of the poet's great ~~grey~~ eyes — *human* kindle anew in these sympathetic pages and throw out new and characteristic sparks of grotesquerie and pathos as his early escapades are recounted, and this human opal becomes charged and charged again with malignant or with beautiful fires, slyly retreating or unexpectedly shooting forth under the magnet of circumstance. These glimpses of personal acquaintances present Poe as a child, a student and a lecturer. The Hamlet nature of the man, with its unsteady purpose, its wonderfully poetic flickerings, its strange logic and its boundless inconsequence, makes him a unique psychological study truly Shakespearean in the multiplicity of its facets and angles. To voyage through the shadow-land of a nature whose good and evil, angel and demon, lie adumbrated rather

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than salient, where melodies of Heaven and cries of Hell float on the never-serene air, and where the radiance of the Mediterranean may in a moment lapse into the glimmer of the rotting tarns of Trinidad, mocks the geography of the psychologist and reduces his pretty charts of the soul to a genuine *terra incognita*. These "glimpses of the moon" reveal Poe, first, as he stands before us a child in the home of his adopted father, Mr. Allan, in the good city of Richmond in the year 1825.

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¶ A brief memorandum relating to Poe, prepared by Thomas H. Ellis, formerly of Richmond, now of Washington, D. C.; a gentleman well-known to the biographers of Poe. [Col. Ellis died lately.]



AUTOGRAPHIC PLATINOTYPE RE-
PRODUCTION OF THE ZOLNAY BUST



AUTOGRAPHIC PLATINOTYPE RE-
PRODUCTION OF THE ZOLNAY BUST

I—POE AS A PLAYMATE

“**O**N the 8th of December, 1811, Mrs. Poe, of English birth, one of the actresses of the company then playing on the Richmond boards, died in Richmond, leaving three children. Her husband had died not long before, in Norfolk. She had made herself a favorite with those who were in the habit of attending the theater, which was then the fashionable entertainment with educated people, both in this country and England. There was general sympathy for the little orphans left by her. The eldest of the three, William Henry, was adopted by his grandfather, Mr. Poe, of

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Baltimore, a gentleman of social position there, and of family pride, who had been much offended by his son's marriage with an actress. This child died young, but lived long enough to develop rare promise. The second child, born January 19, 1809, was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. John Allan, of Richmond; the youngest, a daughter, was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. William Mackenzie, also of Richmond; and the names Edgar Allan and Rose Mackenzie were given in baptism by the Rev. John Buchanan, D.D., at the residence of Mr. John Richard, who was a friend of all the parties concerned.

"The death of Mrs. Poe occurred eighteen days before the burning of the Richmond Theater, and it is not improbable that Mr. and Mrs. Allan would have been present on that occasion but for the circumstance that they were spending the Christmas holidays at Mr. Boller Cocke's, at Turkey Island, with Edgar. Mr. Allan and my father were partners in business. They had been raised together as clerks in the store of Mr. William Galt, who was the

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most successful merchant of his day in Virginia. The business of Ellis and Allan, beginning in 1800, so prospered that after the war of 1812-15, they determined to establish a branch house in London, for which purpose Mr. Allan went abroad and remained in England five years. He was accompanied by his wife (a cousin of my mother), by his sister-in-law, Miss Anne M. Valentine, and by his adopted son. On their return, his own house having been leased, so that he could not get possession of it, Mr. Allan and his family became members of my father's family and lived with us, I suppose, nearly a year. It was then and there that my recollections of Edgar A. Poe began.

"He was very beautiful, yet brave and manly for one so young. No boy ever had a greater influence over me than he had. He was, indeed, a leader among his playmates; but my admiration for him scarcely knew bounds. The consequence was, he led me to do many a forbidden thing, for which I was duly punished. The only whipping I

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ever knew Mr. Allan to give him was for carrying me into the fields and woods beyond 'Belvidere,' adjacent to what is now Hollywood Cemetery, one Saturday, and keeping me there all day and until after dark, without anybody at home knowing where we were; and for shooting a lot of domestic fowls, belonging to the proprietor of 'Belvidere,' who was at that time, I think, Judge Bushrod Washington. He taught me to shoot, to swim, to skate, to play bandy; and I ought to mention that he once saved me from drowning—for having thrown me into the falls headlong, that I might 'strike out' for myself, he presently found it necessary to come to my help or it would have been too late! Mr. and Mrs. Allan having no children of their own, lavished upon him their whole affection; he was sent to the best schools, he was taught every accomplishment that a boy could acquire, he was trained to all the habits of the most polished society. There was not a brighter, more graceful or more attractive boy in the city than Edgar Allan Poe. Talent for

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declamation was one of his gifts. I well remember a public exhibition at the close of a course of instruction in elocution which he had attended, and my delight when, in the presence of a large and distinguished company he bore off the prize in competition with Channing Moore, Cary Wickham, Andrew Johnston, Nat Howard, and others who were regarded as among the most promising of the Richmond boys.

“Not content with an adopted son, Mr. and Mrs. Allan desired to adopt a daughter also, and were constantly begging for my sister, now Mrs. Beverly Tucker. The intimacy between the two families—my father’s and Mr. Allan’s—was naturally very close; on one side—I mean the side of the Ellis boys and girls—our largest Christmas gifts, birthday presents, etc., came from the Allans. Edgar was once guilty of a piece of meanness for which I have not forgiven him to this day. With our father and mother we had gone down to spend Christmas evening with the Allans. Among the toys provided for our entertainment was a snake—a

2.
nice of you

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long, slim, shiny thing made in sections, which were fastened to each other by wires, and a boy, by taking hold of the tail and holding it out from his body, could make it wriggle and dart about in the most lifelike manner. This hideous imitation of a serpent Edgar took in his hand, and kept poking it at my sister Jane until it almost ran her crazy.

"Of course I knew about his swim of seven miles in James River down to Warwick, accompanied by Robert G. Cabell, Robert C. Stanard, and perhaps two or three other schoolboys, with Mr. William Burke, their schoolmaster, who went along in a row-boat to rescue him in case his strength should fail. I knew also of his Thespian performances, when he and William F. Ritchie and James Greenhow and Creed Thomas and Richard Cary Ambler and other schoolmates appeared in dramatic character under a tent erected on a vacant lot one or two squares beyond what is now St. James' Church on Fifth street—admittance fee, one cent! But never was I prouder of him than when,

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dressed in the uniform of the 'Junior Morgan Riflemen' (a volunteer company composed of boys, and which General Lafayette, in his memorable visit to Richmond, selected as his bodyguard), he walked up and down in front of the marquee erected on the Capitol Square, under which the old general held a grand reception in October, 1824.

"One evening there was a meeting of the Gentlemen's Whist Club at my father's house. The members and a few invited guests had assembled and were seated at whist tables set out all over the large parlor, and things were as quiet as they were on a certain "night before Christmas," of which we have read, when a ghost appeared! The ghost, no doubt, expected and intended to frighten the whole body of whist players, who were in truth stirred to a commotion. General Winfield Scott, one of the invited guests, with the resolution and promptness of an old soldier, sprang forward as if he was leading a charge in Lundy's Lane. Dr. Philip Thornton, of Rappahannock, another

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guest, was, however, nearer to the door and quicker than he. Presently, the ghost, finding himself closely pressed, began to retreat, backing around the room, yet keeping his face to the foe, and as the Doctor was reaching out and trying to seize the ghost's nose with the view to twitch it off, the ghost was 'larruping' him over the shoulder with the long cane which he carried in one hand, while with the other hand he was struggling to keep from being tripped by the sheet which enveloped his body. When finally forced to surrender and the mask was taken from his face, Edgar laughed as heartily as ever a ghost did before.

"In February, 1826, Poe was entered as a student at the University of Virginia. There began that course of conduct which, step by step, led to the wretchedness of the after part of his life. Sad, inexpressibly sad, and pathetic it was, indeed."

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¶ The following recollections of Mr. William Wertenbaker, appointed Librarian of the University of Virginia by Jefferson himself, were drawn up in 1869, when the aged Librarian was still living, but have never had an adequate presentation to the public. They appeared eighteen years ago in the *University Magazine* (a local publication), and have been utilized to a slight degree by Poe's biographers (among others by Mr. Woodberry in his admirable *Life*). A close inspection has revealed numerous and important errors in the Wertenbaker account of Poe's University career, the detection of which is due to the researches of Mr. S. Poitevent, a recent student of the University.

II—POE AS A STUDENT

“**M**R. POE was a student during the second session, which commenced February 1st and terminated December 15th, 1826. He signed the matriculation book on the 14th of February, and remained in good standing until the session closed. He was born on the 19th day of January, 1809, being a little over 17 when he matriculated. He entered the schools of Ancient and Modern Languages, attending the lectures in Latin, Greek, French, Spanish and Italian.

“I was myself a member of the last three classes, and can testify that he was tolerably regular in his attendance, and a successful student, having attained distinction at the

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Final Examination in Latin and French; and this was at that time the highest honor a student could obtain. The present regulations in regard to degrees had not then been adopted. Under existing regulations he would have graduated in the two languages above named, and have been entitled to diplomas. On one occasion Professor Blaettermann* requested his Italian class to render into English verse a portion of the lesson in Tasso, which he had assigned them for the next lecture. He did not require this of them as a regular class exercise, but recommended it as one from which he thought the students would derive benefit. At the next lecture on Italian the Professor stated from his chair that Mr. Poe was the only member of the class who had responded to his suggestion, and paid a very high compliment to his performance. As Librarian I had frequent official intercourse with Mr. Poe, but it was at or near the close of the session before I met him in the social circle.

* First professor of Modern Languages in the University of Virginia.

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After spending an evening together at a private house, he invited me in on our return to his room. It was a cold night in December, and his fire having gone pretty nearly out, by the aid of some tallow candles and the fragments of a small table which he broke up for the purpose, he soon rekindled it, and by its comfortable blaze I spent a very pleasant hour with him. On this occasion he spoke with regret of the large amount of money he had wasted and of the debts he had contracted during the session. If my memory is not at fault, he estimated his indebtedness at \$2,000, and, tho they were gaming debts, he was earnest and emphatic in the declaration that he was bound by honor to pay, at the earliest opportunity, every cent of them. He certainly was not habitually intemperate, but he may occasionally have entered into a frolic. I often saw him in the lecture room and in the library, but never in the slightest degree under the influence of intoxicating liquors. Among the professors he had the reputation of being a sober, quiet and orderly young

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man, and to them and the officers his deportment was uniformly that of an intelligent and polished gentleman. Altho his practice of gaming did escape detection, the hardihood, intemperance and reckless wildness imputed to him by his biographers, had he been guilty of them, must inevitably have come to the knowledge of the faculty and met with merited punishment. The records of which I was then, and am still, the custodian, attest that at no time during the session did he fall under the censure of the faculty. Mr. Poe's connection with the university was dissolved by the termination of the session on the 15th of December, 1826. He then wanted little over a month of having attained to the age of 18; the date of his birth was plainly entered in his own handwriting on the matriculation book. Were he now living his age on the 19th of this month (January, 1869) would be 60. He never returned to the university, and I think it probable that the night I visited him was the last he spent here. I draw this inference not from memory, but from the fact, that having no further

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use for his candles and table he made fuel of them

“Mr. Poe’s works are more in demand and more read than those of any other author, American or foreign, now in the library. To gratify curiosity I copy from the register a list of the books which Mr. Poe borrowed from the library while he was a student: Rollin—‘*Histoire Ancienne*,’ ‘*Histoire Romaine*;’ Robertson’s—‘*America*;’ Marshall’s—‘*Washington*;’ Voltaire’s—‘*Histoire Particulière*;’ Dufief’s—‘*Nature Displayed*.’

“UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, January, 1869.”

Mr. Poitevent’s *étude* analyzes the Wertebaker memoir carefully, and corrects it in some important particulars. Among these are the facts that he did not sign the matriculation in his own handwriting, and there is no faculty record of his attending any classes but the Senior Latin and the Senior French, in which he is said to have “excelled” (Faculty Minutes, December 15th, 1826, Vol. II, p. 3). When summoned before the

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faculty with eight of his fellow students to testify whether or not certain university hotel-keepers had been in the habit of playing at games of chance with the students in their dormitories, Poe simply says:

“Edgar Poe never heard until now of any **HOTEL KEEPERS** playing cards or drinking with students.” (Faculty Minutes, Vol. II, p. 15.)

There is no record of rustication, expulsion or punishment of any kind inflicted in the official books of the university. Mr. Poitevent continues:

He was the one hundred and thirty-sixth student who matriculated. He entered February 14th, 1826; gave his name as Edgar A. Poe; date of birth, “19th of January, 1809;” parent or guardian, “John Allen,” the *e* afterward having been changed in lead pencil to *a*; place of residence, “Richmond;” professors attended, “Long” [Professor of Greek and Latin] and “Blaet-

The Faculty met. December 20th 1826
 Present John Tolson, Chairman
 Dr. Sumpster
 Dr. Blodgett
 Dr. Bonnycastle
 Tucker
 Key

The Chairman presented to the Faculty a letter from the
 Doctor giving information that certain Hotel Keepers
 during the last session had been in the habit of
 playing at games of chance with the Students in
 the Dormitories, he also gave the names of the
 following persons who he had been informed had
 some knowledge of the facts: Roger Mason, Turner Dixie,
 William Towell, E. LeBaron, Edgar Poe, Edmund C.
 Green and Emanuel Miller Hugh Pleasant N. S. Green
 who having been sworn in to the game before

Dr. Green, has heard of Hotel Keepers playing cards
 with Students. heard before Green heard
 names mentioned, not being a Chapman, was not
 anything of the kind. Green heard of Hotel Keepers
 drinking with Students.

E. S. Miller has heard of one Hotel Keeper playing
 at cards with Students. never heard of any money
 or Chapman. has seen four Hotel Keepers drinking
 in the Dormitories with Students, on 6th Feb. 1826, party
 at end of games in Dormitory. Hotel Keepers drinking
 certainly had a bottle while in Dormitory was playing
 by called on.

Edgar Poe never heard or said more of any Hotel Keepers
 playing cards or drinking with Students.

Edmund Green never heard of any Hotel Keepers playing
 with Students at cards before last session. last
 session saw he thought a Hotel Keeper drinking and
 drinking with Students.

Edgar Poe never heard or said more of any Hotel Keepers
 playing cards or drinking with Students.

EXTRACT FROM THE FACULTY MINUTES OF THE
 UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA FOR DECEMBER 20TH,
 1826, just before Poe left, recording a meeting of the
 Faculty and an investigation into the charge that the
 University hotel keepers were in the habit of gambling
 and drinking with students, with Edgar Poe's statement
 denying any knowledge of the alleged practices.

the first of these is the fact that the
the second is the fact that the
the third is the fact that the
the fourth is the fact that the
the fifth is the fact that the
the sixth is the fact that the
the seventh is the fact that the
the eighth is the fact that the
the ninth is the fact that the
the tenth is the fact that the

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termann" [Professor of French, German, Italian, Spanish, Anglo-Saxon]. Under the head of "Remarks" there is a blank opposite his name. The custom then prevailing was for the Proctor to write under this head the final disposition of each student; thus if one withdrew or was suspended, or was expelled before the end of the session, the fact was duly registered; otherwise the blank remained. And, therefore, the conclusion may be drawn that he was neither expelled, as Dr. Griswold asserts, nor suspended, according to Mr. Lowell. Hence from the Proctor's point of view, his record is clean of all college dishonor.

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¶ A note from the eminent Grecian, Prof. B. L. Gildersleeve, Editor of *The American Journal of Philology* and Professor of Greek in the Johns Hopkins University, thus describes Poe as he appeared in the year 1849, before a Richmond audience, reciting "The Raven":

III—POE AS A LECTURER

OUR concluding glimpse of this strange life-drama, which began the same year as Tennyson's, Darwin's, Gladstone's, Abraham Lincoln's, Chopin's and Mendelssohn's,—an *annus mirabilis* of poetry, music, wit, oratory and science,—is of Poe as a lecturer after he had attained celebrity as a writer. But, meanwhile, when we contemplate Gladstone's and Tennyson's long lives, a keen regret may well flash through the mind for an exquisite gift cut off so untimely, which might have flowered into marvelous exuberance; for at forty Tennyson was not yet laureate and Poe—was dead.

Poe's personality is as vivid to me as if I

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had heard and seen him yesterday. I am old enough to remember what an excitement his "Gold Bug" created in Charleston when it first appeared, and how severely we boys criticised the inaccuracies in the description of Sullivan's Island. Poe himself I saw and heard in Richmond during the last summer of his life. He was lodging at some poor place in Broad street, if I am not mistaken. At least I saw him repeatedly in that thoroughfare—a poetical figure, if there ever was one, clad in black as was the fashion then—slender—erect—the subtle lines of his face fixed in meditation. I thought him wonderfully handsome, the mouth being the only weak point. I was too shy to seek an introduction to the poet, but John R. Thompson procured for me Poe's autograph, a possession, of which I was naturally very proud.

While Poe was in Richmond some of his friends got up a reading for his benefit, and I heard him read the "Raven" and some other poems before a small audience in one of the parlors of the Exchange Hotel. In

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spite of my admiration of Poe I was not an uncritical listener, and I have retained the impression that he did not read very well. His voice was pleasant enough, but he emphasized the rhythm unduly—a failing common, I believe, to poets endowed with a keen sense of the music of their own verse.

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¶ This picturesque glimpse of the poet may well be supplemented by another from the pen of Bishop O. P. Fitzgerald who, in a talk to the Poe Memorial Association of the University in December, 1898, threw his recollections of Poe for the writer into the following impressive form :

IV—CONCLUSION — EDGAR ALLAN POE: A TALK

A COMPACT, well-set man about five feet six inches high, straight as an arrow, easy-gaited, with white linen coat and trousers, black velvet vest and broad Panama hat, features sad, yet finely cut, shapely head, and eyes that were strangely magnetic as you looked into them—this is the image of Edgar Allan Poe most vivid to my mind as I saw him one warm day in Richmond in 1849. There was a fascination about him that everybody felt. Meeting him in the midst of thousands a stranger would stop to get a second look, and to ask, "Who is he?" He was *distingué* in a peculiar sense—a man bearing the stamp of genius and the charm of

10 - See up person

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a melancholy that drew one toward him with a strange sympathy. He was scarcely less unique in his personality than in his literary quality. His writings had already given him national reputation. The gentleness of his manner and the tones of his voice seemed to me to be strangely contrasted with the bitterness that characterized his personal controversies. These controversies were strangely numerous, and in nearly all cases their intensity was in the inverse ratio to the importance of the issues involved. Poe, I suspect, was one of the men who said worse things than he felt, his talent for satire proving a snare to him, as it has been to many others who with pen or tongue sacrifice moderation for brilliancy or piquancy of expression. He was harshly treated by some of his contemporaries, but he owed them nothing on this account, giving them as good as they sent in the way of invective or sarcasm. The bitter personalities of literary men at that time were owing in part to an evil fashion then prevalent. The dueling and street fights among politicians had

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, That we *Edgar A*

Poe and Thomas W Cleland

and acting as governor

are held and firmly bound unto *Wm. Ham Robertson* Lieutenant Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, in the just and full sum of ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS, to the payment whereof, well and truly to be made to the said Governor or his successors, for the use of the said Commonwealth, we bind ourselves and each of us, our and each of our heirs, executors and administrators, jointly and severally, firmly by these presents Sealed with our seals, and dated this *16th* day of *May* 1836.

THE CONDITION OF THE ABOVE OBLIGATION IS SUCH, That whereas a marriage is shortly intended to be had and solemnized between the above bound *Edgar A Poe* and *Virginia E. Clemm* of the City of Richmond. Now if there is no lawful cause to obstruct said marriage, then the above obligation to be void, else to remain in full force and virtue.

Signed, sealed and delivered }
in the presence of

Chs Howard

Edgar A Poe



Thos. W. Cleland



CITY OF RICHMOND, To wit:

This day *Thomas W. Cleland* above named, made oath before me, as *Deputy* Clerk of the Court of Husbings for the said City, that *Virginia E. Clemm* is of the full age of twenty-one years, and a resident of the said City. Given under my hand, this *16.* day of *May* 1836

Chs Howard



New Glimpses of Poe

their counterpart in the shedding of vitriolic ink among the *literati*, great and small. Poe only differed from the rest in that he had a sharper thrust and a surer aim.

The Richmond *Examiner* was just then achieving its first and winning distinction as an able and ultra advocate of State Rights politics. John C. Calhoun was the leader and the young "chivalry" of the South made a following that was heroic, and that did not stop to count the cost. The *Examiner* was their organ in Virginia—and a live organ it was. John M. Daniel, its editor-in-chief wrote political leaders that were logic and rhetoric on fire. Robert W. Hughes discussed in good English economic questions from the standpoint of his time and his section. Arthur E. Petticolas wrote concerning art with much enthusiasm and some show of culture. Patrick Henry Aylette, a kinsman of the great orator of the Revolution, whose Christian name he bore, with a free hand touched up current politics and living politicians. Aylette was a picturesque Virginian of that time—a man

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nearly seven feet high who had something of the eloquence of his renowned ancestor, and the easy swing of a man of the people, a man who believed with all his heart in the Revolution of '98 and '99, and uniformly voted the straight Democratic ticket. Mr. Poe now and then contributed a literary article critical and peculiar, unmistakably his own. There were others who wrote for the *Examiner*—among them a youth who felt called upon to expound oracularly certain controverted Constitutional questions that Clay, Calhoun and Webster had failed to settle. He was a young man then, and need not be named now.

Poe and Daniel were often together, and I was not surprised when informed that arrangements had been made by which the former was soon to become the literary editor of the *Examiner*, was talked of in newspaper circles, and much satisfaction expressed by the initiated, who regarded it as a transaction promising good things for Southern journalism and literature. The *Examiner*, the new star in the journalistic

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firmament, was expected to blaze with added lustre and fill all the South with the illumination.

Poe had the sensitive organization of a man of genius, to whom alcoholic stimulation brings madness; for such there is no middle ground between total abstinence and inebriety. By the persuasion of friends he was induced to take a pledge of total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks. There is no reason to doubt his sincerity. His sad face took on a more hopeful expression; with a new hope in his heart he was about to make a new start in life. It was announced that he would soon make a visit to New York to close out his affairs there, preparatory to his entrance upon his new engagement at Richmond. With a view to giving him pecuniary assistance in a delicate way, and an expression of the good will of the Richmond public toward him, Poe was invited to deliver a lecture on some topic to be chosen by himself. The tickets were placed at five dollars each and at that price three hundred persons were packed into the

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assembly rooms of the old Exchange Hotel. The lecture prepared for that occasion was on "The Poetic Principle," and it was read by him as it is now presented in his works. He was a charming reader, his manner the opposite of the elocutionary or sensational—quiet, without gesture, with distinctness of utterance, nice shadings of accent, easy gracefulness, and that indefinable element that draws the hearer toward the speaker with increasing good will and pleasure. I am glad that I heard Poe read that lecture; its sentences on the printed page have for me an added charm from the recollection. The net proceeds of the lecture amounted to fifteen hundred dollars. There was a touch of old Virginia in the way this was done. There is some of that old Virginia still left. The Virginia of that day and this will demonstrate their identity in the outcome of the movement to provide here at your university a suitable memorial of her most distinguished alumnus.

With the proceeds of this lecture in hand, Mr. Poe started to New York, but he never

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made the journey. Stopping in Baltimore *en route* he was invited to a birthday party. During the feast the fair hostess asked him to pledge with wine; and he could not refuse. That glass of wine was a spark to a powder magazine. He went on a ~~debauch~~, and a few days later died in a hospital of *mania a potu*. On its nearer side death is a tragedy whenever, wherever and however it may come. But the tragedy of Poe's death is too deep for words of mine. He was only thirty-nine years old. His best work ought to have been before him. Had he lived and worked with unclouded brain and ardent purpose during the tremendous decades that followed, what might he not have achieved! Who can compute the loss to our literature from his untimely death!

Go on with your work, gentlemen of the University of Virginia, provide a fitting memorial to Edgar Allan Poe, your illustrious son. Young gentlemen of the University, do your part in this good work—and shun the rock on which he was wrecked.

This Trilogy in three Glimpses thus gives

See
Dr. Moran's
definition.
?

New Glimpses of Poe

us three insights into a remarkable nature at three critical periods of its career: the child, the student, the man. The fallen angel began to fall very early, with elements of pity and terror in the tragedy which might have satisfied Aristotle himself.

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¶ Zolnay's bust of Poe was unveiled with brilliant ceremonies in the Public Hall of the University, October 7, 1899. Mr. Hamilton W. Mabie, the guest of the Poe Association, delivered a masterly address on "Poe's Relations to American Literature."

Mr. Mabie's address was afterwards reprinted in *The Atlantic Monthly*.

¶ The photographic reproductions of the Poe Bust are included in this volume by the courtesy of Mr. George Zolnay—having been made from the model just before casting in bronze and are unique inasmuch as it is impossible to get a similar effect from the bronze.

¶ The MS. fac simile are produced from the records in the archives of the University of Virginia..

¶ The fac simile of the Poe Marriage Bond is inserted through the courtesy of Hamilton Holt, Esq., of New York City.

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